

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2009-500-C - ORDER NO. 2010-____
MARCH __, 2010

IN RE: Application of Georgia Business Net)	
Telecommunications, LLC for a Certificate of)	ORDER GRANTING
Public Convenience and Necessity to Provide)	CERTIFICATE AND
Local Exchange Service and Intrastate)	APPROVING FLEXIBLE
Interexchange Services within the State of)	AND MODIFIED
South Carolina, for Flexible Rate Structure)	ALTERNATIVE
for Local Exchange Service Offerings First)	REGULATION
Approved in Docket No. 97-467-C and for		
Alternative Regulation First Approved in		
Docket No. 95-661-C		

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (“Commission”) by way of the Application of Georgia Business Net Telecommunications, LLC (“GABN” or the “Company”) requesting a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity authorizing it to provide resold and facilities-based interexchange and local exchange telecommunications services within the State of South Carolina. The Company’s Application was filed pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §58-9-280 (Supp. 2009) and the rules and regulations of the Commission. By its Application, GABN also requests flexible regulation of its local exchange service offerings pursuant to Order No. 98-165 in Docket No. 1997-467-C, alternative regulation of its business interexchange services consistent with Commission Orders, and waiver of certain Commission regulations.

The Commission’s Docketing Department instructed GABN to publish, one time, a Notice of Filing in newspapers of general circulation in the areas of the state affected by

the Application. The purpose of the Notice of Filing was to inform interested parties of the Application of GABN and of the manner and time in which to file the appropriate pleadings for participation in the proceeding. GABN complied with this instruction and provided the Commission with proof of publication of the Notice of Filing. A Petition to Intervene was filed by the South Carolina Telephone Coalition (“SCTC”). Subsequent to the intervention, GABN and the SCTC reached a Stipulation, attached hereto as Order Exhibit 1.

Subsequently, GABN and the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (“ORS”) filed a Stipulation attached hereto as Order Exhibit 2. A hearing was convened on March 8, 2010, at 10:30 a.m. in the Commission’s Law Library in Columbia, South Carolina, before David Butler, Hearing Examiner. GABN was represented by John J. Pringle, Jr., Esquire. The ORS was represented by Shannon Bowyer Hudson, Esquire. William Colvin, the president of the Company appeared and testified in support of the Company’s Application.

The record reveals that GABN is a limited liability company organized under the laws of the State of Georgia and that it is registered to transact business in South Carolina as a foreign company. According to Mr. Colvin, the Company seeks authority to provide local exchange and interexchange services. Mr. Colvin explained the Company’s request for authority, and the record further reveals the Company’s services, operations, and marketing procedures. The Company intends to offer services in South Carolina through a combination of its own facilities and facilities leased from AT&T. Mr. Colvin also discussed GABN’s technical, financial, and managerial resources to provide the services

for which it seeks authority. Mr. Colvin offered that GABN possesses sufficient financial resources to support its operations in South Carolina.

With regard to management and technical capabilities, the Company's Application and Mr. Colvin's testimony both evidence that GABN's management has experience in telecommunications, information technology, regulatory matters, and accounting and finance. Mr. Colvin also testified that GABN will operate in accordance with Commission rules, regulations, guidelines, and Commission Orders. Mr. Colvin offered that approval of GABN's Application would serve the public interest. Mr. Colvin, on behalf of the Company, requested an exemption from record keeping policies that require maintenance of financial records in conformance with the Uniform System of Accounts ("USOA"). GABN maintains its books in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles ("GAAP").

After consideration of the applicable law, the Company's Application, and the evidence presented at the hearing, the Commission hereby issues its findings of fact and conclusions of law:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. GABN is organized as a limited liability company under the laws of the State of Georgia, and is authorized to do business as a foreign company in South Carolina by the Secretary of State.

2. GABN desires to operate as a provider of resold and facilities-based local and interexchange services in South Carolina.

3. We find that GABN possesses the managerial experience and capability to operate as a provider, through resale and by means of its own facilities, of local exchange services and interexchange services in South Carolina.

4. We find that GABN possesses sufficient financial resources to provide the services as described in its Application and testimony.

5. We find that the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to GABN to operate as a provider of interexchange and local exchange telecommunications services in South Carolina would be in the best interest of the citizens of South Carolina by providing more innovative services.

6. We find that GABN does not intend to offer prepaid calling card services but, in the event that GABN in the future offers or provides such a service, GABN shall post a surety bond or certificate of deposit for prepaid calling card and long distance services in the amount of \$5,000 as required by the Commission

7. GABN requests a waiver of 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-610. The Commission finds GABN's requested waiver reasonable and understands the potential difficulty presented to GABN should the waiver not be granted. Further, we find that a waiver of 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-610 to be in the public interest. We also believe that exemption from the policies that would require the Company to keep its records under the USOA is reasonable.

8. The Company has the managerial, technical, and financial resources to provide the services as described in its Application. S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-9-280 (B) (1) (Supp. 2009).

9. The Commission finds that the Company's "provision of service will not adversely impact the availability of affordable local exchange service." S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-9-280 (B) (3) (Supp. 2009).

10. The Commission finds that the Company will support universally available telephone service at affordable rates. S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-9-280 (B) (4) (Supp. 2009).

11. The Commission finds that services to be provided by the Company will meet the service standards of the Commission. S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-9-280 (B) (2) (Supp. 2009).

12. The Commission finds that the provision of local exchange service by the Company "does not otherwise adversely impact the public interest." S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-9-280(B)(5) (Supp. 2009).

The Stipulation between the Applicant and the ORS is fair and reasonable and in the public interest.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission concludes that GABN possesses the managerial, technical, and financial resources to provide the telecommunications services as described in its Application.

2. The Commission concludes that GABN will participate in the support of universally available telephone service at affordable rates to the extent that GABN may be required to do so by the Commission.

3. The Commission concludes that GABN will provide services which will meet the service standards of the Commission.

4. The Commission concludes that approval of GABN's Application to provide intrastate telecommunications services within South Carolina will serve the public interest by providing for efficient use of existing telecommunications resources.

5. The Commission concludes that the provision of telecommunications service by GABN will not adversely impact the public interest.

6. The Commission concludes that the issuance of the authority to provide intrastate interexchange and local exchange telecommunications services as requested by GABN and as set forth in its Application and Mr. Colvin's testimony is in the best interests of the citizens of the State of South Carolina.

7. The Commission concludes that a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity should be granted to GABN to provide resold and facilities-based intrastate interexchange and local exchange telecommunications services.

8. The Commission adopts a rate design for GABN for its residential interexchange services which include maximum rate levels for each tariff charge. A rate structure incorporating maximum rate levels with the flexibility for adjustment below the maximum rate levels has been previously adopted by the Commission. *In Re: Application of GTE Sprint Communications Corporation, etc.*, Order No. 84-622, issued in Docket No. 84-10-C (August 2, 1984).

9. GABN shall not adjust its residential interexchange rates for end-users below the approved maximum level without notice to the Commission and to the public.

GABN shall file its proposed rate changes, publish its notice of such changes, and file affidavits of publication with the Commission two weeks prior to the effective date of the changes. However, the public notice requirement is waived, and therefore not required, for reductions below the maximum cap in instances which do not affect the general body of subscribers or do not constitute a general rate reduction. *In Re: Application of GTE Sprint Communications, etc.*, Order No. 93-638, issued in Docket No. 84-10-C (July 16, 1993). Any proposed increase in the maximum rate level for residential interexchange services reflected in the tariff which would be applicable to the general body of the Company's subscribers shall constitute a general ratemaking proceeding and will be treated in accordance with the notice and hearing provisions of S.C. Code Ann. §58-9-540 (Supp.2009).

10. The Commission concludes that GABN's intrastate interexchange business telecommunications services shall be regulated in accordance with the principles and procedures established for alternative regulation of business service offerings set out in Order Nos. 95-1734 and 96-55 in Docket No. 95-661-C. The Commission has previously granted this "alternative regulation" to competitive intrastate interexchange carriers operating within South Carolina, and the Commission concludes that the competitive marketplace requires the Commission to allow this flexible regulation to those carriers which request it. Specifically, the Commission-approved alternative regulation allows business service offerings, including consumer card services, operator services, and private line service, to be subject to a relaxed regulatory scheme identical to

that granted to AT&T Communications in Order Nos. 95-1734 and 96-55 in Docket No. 95-661-C.

However, pursuant to Order No. 2001-997 (Docket No. 2000-407-C), this Commission has modified alternative regulation by the re-imposition of rate caps with regard to certain “operator-assisted calls” where a customer uses a local exchange carrier’s calling card to complete calls from locations which have not selected that local exchange carrier as the toll provider. Order No. 2001-997, dated November 8, 2001, imposed a maximum cap of \$1.75 for operator surcharges for such calls, and a maximum cap of \$0.35 related to the flat per-minute rate associated with these calls. Under this relaxed regulatory scheme, tariff filings for business services shall be presumed valid upon filing.

If an investigation of a particular tariff filing is instituted within seven days of the filing date, the tariff filing will then be suspended until further Order of the Commission. If an investigation is instituted on a particular tariff filing, notice of the investigation will be provided to the person or entity making the tariff filing and to the Commission. The notice is timely if dated within seven days of the filing date.

11. The Commission concludes the Company’s local exchange telecommunications services shall be regulated in accordance with the principles and procedures established for flexible regulation first granted to NewSouth Communications by Order No. 98-165 in Docket No. 97-467-C. Specifically, the Commission adopts for the Company’s competitive intrastate local exchange services a rate structure incorporating maximum rate levels with the flexibility for adjustment below the

maximum rate levels approved by the Commission. Further, the Company's local exchange service tariff filings are presumed valid upon filing. An investigation of the tariff filing may be instituted within 30 days of the tariff filing, in which case the tariff filing would be suspended pending further Order of the Commission. If an investigation is instituted on a particular tariff filing, notice of the investigation will be provided to the person or entity making the tariff filing and to the Commission. The notice is timely if dated within thirty days of the filing date. Further, any such tariff filings will be subject to the same monitoring process as similarly situated local exchange carriers.

12. We conclude that GABN's request for waiver of 26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-610 should be granted, since strict compliance with the regulation potentially causes undue hardship on the Company. We also grant exemption from the policies requiring the use of USOA.

13. The Stipulation between the Applicant and the ORS should be approved.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED THAT:

1. A Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity should be granted to GABN to provide resold interexchange services and through the resale of services authorized for resale by tariffs of carriers approved by the Commission and by means of its own facilities as applicable, as well as to provide resold and facilities-based local exchange telecommunications services within the State of South Carolina.

2. The Company's rate designs for its products shall conform to those designs described in Conclusions of Law above.

3. If it has not already done so by the date of issuance of this Order, GABN shall file its revised tariff, if any, and an accompanying price list for any applicable rates within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Order. The revised tariff shall be consistent with the findings of this Order and shall be consistent with the Commission's Rules and Regulations, as well as the provisions of the GABN-ORS Stipulation.

4. GABN agrees it will file its final, revised tariff utilizing the Commission's e-filing system for tariffs. The revised tariff should be electronically filed in a text searchable PDF format using the Commission's DMS System (<http://dms.psc.sc.gov>). An additional copy should be sent via email to etariff@psc.sc.gov to be included in the Commission's ETariff System (<http://etariff.psc.sc.gov>). Future revisions to the tariff should be made using the ETariff System. The revised tariff shall be consistent with the findings of this Order and shall be consistent with the Commission's Rules and Regulations.

5. The Company's service is subject to access charges pursuant to Commission Order No. 86-584, in which the Commission determined that for access purposes resellers and facilities-based interexchange carriers should be treated similarly.

6. With regard to the Company's resale of service, an end-user should be able to access another interexchange carrier or operator service provider if the end-user so desires.

7. GABN shall resell the services of only those interexchange carriers or LECs authorized to do business in South Carolina by this Commission. If GABN changes underlying carriers, it shall notify the Commission in writing.

8. With regard to the origination and termination of toll calls within the same LATA, GABN shall comply with the terms of Order No. 93-462, Order Approving Stipulation and Agreement, in Docket Nos. 92-182-C, 92-183-C, and 92-200-C (June 3, 1993), with the exception of the 10-XXX intraLATA dialing requirement, which has been rendered obsolete by the toll dialing parity rules established by the FCC pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (47 C.F.R. § 51.209). Specifically, GABN shall comply with the imputation standard as adopted by Order No. 93-462 and more fully described in paragraph 4 of the Stipulation and Appendix B approved by Order No. 93-462.

9. GABN shall file annual financial information in the form of annual reports and gross receipts reports as required by the Commission. The annual report and the gross receipt report will necessitate the filing of intrastate information. Therefore, GABN shall keep financial records on an intrastate basis for South Carolina to comply with the annual report and gross receipts filings. The proper form for filing annual financial information can be found at the Commission's website or at the ORS' website at www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov. The title of this form is "Telecommunications Company Annual Report." This form shall be utilized by the Company to file annual financial information with the Commission and ORS and shall be filed no later than **April 1st**.

Commission gross receipts forms are due to be filed with the Commission and ORS no later than **August 31st** of each year. The proper form for filing gross receipts information can be found at the ORS website at www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov, and the appropriate form is entitled "Gross Receipts Form."

Each telecommunications company certified in South Carolina is required to file annually with the ORS the South Carolina Universal Service Fund (“USF”) Contribution Worksheet, which may be found on the ORS’s website at www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov. This worksheet provides ORS information required to determine each telecommunications company’s liability to the State USF fund. The State USF worksheet is due to be filed annually no later than **July 1st** with ORS.

10. The Company shall, in compliance with Commission regulations, designate and maintain an authorized utility representative who is prepared to discuss, on a regulatory level, customer relations (complaint) matters, engineering operations, tests, and repairs. In addition, the Company shall provide to the Commission and ORS in writing the name of the authorized representative to be contacted in connection with general management duties as well as emergencies which occur during non-office hours. GABN shall file the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of these representatives with the Commission within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Order. The “Authorized Utility Representative Information” form can be found at the Commission’s website at www.psc.sc.gov/forms.asp; this form shall be utilized for the provision of this information to the Commission and ORS. Further, the Company shall promptly notify the Commission and ORS in writing if the representatives are changed.

11. The Company is directed to comply with all Rules and Regulations of the Commission, unless a regulation is specifically waived by the Commission.

12. At the hearing, GABN requested a waiver of 26 Code Ann. Regs. 103-610 (Supp. 2009), which requires that records required by the Commission’s Rules and

Regulations be maintained in South Carolina. The Commission finds GABN's requested waiver reasonable and understands the potential difficulty presented to GABN should the waiver not be granted. The Commission therefore grants the requested waiver. However, GABN shall make available its books and records at all reasonable times upon request by the ORS, and GABN shall promptly notify the Commission and ORS if the location of its books and records changes.

13. GABN also requests that it be exempt from record keeping policies that require a carrier to maintain its financial records in conformance with the Uniform System of Accounts. The USOA was developed by the FCC as a means of regulating telecommunications companies subject to rate base regulation. As a competitive carrier, GABN maintains its book of accounts in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles ("GAAP"). GAAP is used extensively by interexchange carriers and other competitive local exchange carriers. Accordingly, GABN requests an exemption from the USOA requirements. We grant the Company's request for the reasons stated above.

14. GABN shall be required to comply with Title 23, Chapter 47, South Carolina Code of Laws Annotated which governs the establishment and implementation of a "Public Safety Communications Center," which is more commonly known as a "911 system" or "911 service." Services available through a 911 system include law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services. In recognition of the necessity of quality 911 services being provided to the citizens of South Carolina, the Commission hereby instructs GABN to contact the appropriate authorities regarding 911 service in the

counties and cities where GABN will be operating. Contact with the appropriate 911 service authorities is to be made before providing voice or dial tone telephone service in South Carolina. Accompanying this Order is a memo from the State 911 Office of Research & Statistics of the South Carolina Budget and Control Board. This memo provides information about contacting County 911 Coordinators. By this Order and prior to providing voice or dial-tone services in South Carolina, GABN is directed to contact the 911 Coordinator in each county, as well as the 911 Coordinator in each city where the city has its own 911 system, and shall provide information regarding the Company's operations as required by the 911 system.

15. To the extent necessary, GABN shall engage in good faith negotiations with non-BellSouth incumbent local exchange carriers whose networks interconnect with BellSouth at the same local tandem regarding traffic exchange;

16. The Stipulation between the Applicant and the ORS is hereby approved.

17. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further Order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

Elizabeth B. Fleming, Chairman

ATTEST:

John E. Howard, Vice Chairman

(SEAL)